



Newsline

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March 2002

Governor and Delegation Step Up To Protect Montana's Highway Funds

In January, the Federal Highway Administration announced that Federal highway funding would drop drastically in Federal fiscal year 2003. Nationally, the administration's budget would cut the Federal-aid highway program by 27%. In Montana, this would mean funding reductions from the 2002 level of \$271 million to \$205 million in 2003. The reason for these cuts is a provision known as Revenue Aligned Budget Authority or RABA. Under RABA, Federal highway program funding is adjusted annually - upward or downward - based on actual past and estimated future revenues into the Highway Trust Fund. Over the three-year period from 2000 through 2002, the RABA adjustment provided an additional \$76.2 million to Montana's highway and safety programs. In 2003, for the first time, the RABA adjustment will be negative and by a huge amount. According to the Department of Treasury, the Federal agency making the revenue estimates used in the RABA calculation, revenue is down due to: slower growth than expected in federal fuel tax collections from the slow economy, decreased sales of heavy trucks and increased sales in gasoline (which pays less in Federal fuel taxes).

If allowed to stand, the Federal reduction would take Montana's highway program from a \$271 million high in 2002 to \$205 million for fiscal year 2003, roughly a \$66 million reduction. This funding cut will cause a loss of over 2,500 high-paying jobs in the design and construction industries over the next three years. The cuts will also defer or delay work on Montana's much needed highway construction projects. This translates into deferred safety and mobility benefits to Montana's citizens. The cuts will also decrease the number of projects going into development by roughly 25 percent. Besides the direct impact from a reduced highway construction program, Montana will experience negative indirect economic effects from fewer highway dollars turning over in Montana communities.

The Good News

Governor Martz has taken a leadership role within the National Governor's Association in advancing policy urging full restoration to the 2002 funding levels. She was among the first governors to contact President Bush and urge him to reconsider the reduced highway funding levels. "This loss or reduction of jobs will effect the overall economic development for Montana and that is a grave con-

cern to me," Governor Martz said in her letter to President Bush.

Montana's Congressional Delegation is well poised to lend a hand. Senators Baucus and Burns and Congressman Rehberg are sponsoring the "Highway Funding Restoration Act" which would establish a "floor" for 2003 funding at TEA-21 baseline levels. This bill is receiving bi-partisan support in both the House and the Senate. This bill would take Montana's 2003 funding to \$241, over \$36 million more than the amount in the President's budget. There are also efforts afoot to move this level closer to 2002 funding. Transportation Director Dave Galt said, "We're glad our delegation is so well positioned to reverse these cuts in highway funding, and we're grateful they are working so hard to get it done." The Transportation Commission has made no decisions as to which projects to move out of the planned 2003 construction program, and actual 2003 funding levels are not likely to be known until the end of the Federal appropriations process later this fall.

For more information about RABA contact Sandra Straehl at (406) 444-7692 or e-mail sstraehl@state.mt.us



Townsend Project Enhances Community



Before



After

Prior to 2000, Townsend's Front Street, also known as US Highways 12 & 287, resembled many other Montana streets originally constructed when Model A's and horses and buggies were not-so-distant memories. The paved surface was narrow, accesses were unlimited and unsafe, bicycle and pedestrian facilities were nonexistent, and rear-end collisions were increasing as traffic and adjacent development increased. This all changed with the completion in early 2001 of the first major reconstruction of Front Street since 1940.

Front Street now has curbs and gutters, sidewalks, paved shoulders, combined accesses, new street lights, underground utilities, and a continuous left turn. These improvements have dramatically improved the appearance of the area as well as the safety of all the users of this important corridor. As an added benefit, MDT coordinated the construction project with a Community Transportation Enhancement Program bicycle and pedestrian trail project to reduce project costs for the community.

Townsend joins other communities including Norris, Dixon, and Seeley Lake that have benefited from MDT "Main Street" highway projects in recent years. Similar projects are planned in other communities including Boulder and Whitehall as MDT continues to improve Montana's highways.



Before



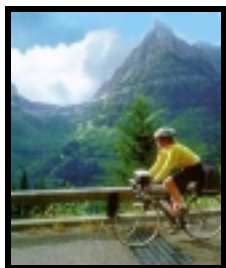
After



TRANSIT TALES



Montana Bicycle Safety Study Underway



Montana's 57th Legislature passed House Joint Resolution 37 (HJR 37) which called for a study - in the context of providing for bicycle safety - of the planning, design, and construction of Montana's highways and any programs or requirements for driver's education, training or licensing or for cyclist safety equipment or clothing.

There is a growing trend in the use of bicycles as a primary mode of transportation and bicycles are increasingly a vehicle of choice for tourists, recreationists, and commuters. The presence of bicycles on highways and streets presents certain challenges and dangers to cyclists and other highway users alike. With this growing trend in the number of cyclists comes an increase in the number and frequency of conflicts between motorists and cyclists.

MDT has hired Robert Peccia & Associates of Helena and Alta Transportation Consulting of Redmond, Washington to conduct the study. The study effort will include input from an advisory committee made up of representatives from local law enforcement, Highway Patrol, Motor Carrier Services, Adventure Cycling, City of Missoula Bicycle/Pedestrian Program, Office of Public Instruction as well as Representative Jeff Pattison and Senator Pete Ekregren. The study will be completed by the end of September.

If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this study please contact Carol Strizich, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, at (406) 444-9273 or e-mail cstrizich@state.mt.us.

Transit Planning and Research Grant Program

MDT's Transit Section provides Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning funds through the Section 5313 Grant Program for various planning and research projects for transit agencies statewide. Section 5313 funds are primarily used by the Transit Section to fund transit development plans (TDPs) for MDT grant recipients who provide rural general public passenger transportation service. However, MDT is currently funding a project with Galavan in Bozeman to conduct a marketing plan for its transit program that serves the elderly and persons with disabilities.



Recent FTA Section 5313 projects include:

- Montana Rural Passenger Needs Study
- Montana Transit Facility Needs Study
- Bus Pullout/Park and Ride Study
- Transportation Demand Management Tool Kit
- Transit Directory
- Environmental Assessment for the Blackfeet Tribe
- Bus Scheduling Study for Butte-Silver Bow Transit
- Expansion Research Study for the Missoula-Ravalli Transportation Management Association

For further information on this program, please contact Tom Stuber, Section 5313 Program Manager at (406) 444-9216 or e-mail tstuber@state.mt.us.

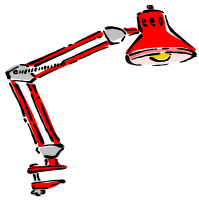
MDT Transportation Demand Management Toolkit Available



The "Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Toolkit," developed by the consulting firm of Leigh, Scott and Cleary, is now available for distribution. TDM products and services include developing alternatives to single occupant vehicles such as carpools, vanpools, transit, bicycles and walking. Alternative work-hour programs such as flextime and telecommuting are also TDM strategies.

The purpose of the TDM Toolkit is to provide detailed information and technical assistance that will help communities interested in developing local TDM programs.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of this document, please contact Janis Winston at (406) 444-4210, or by e-mail jwinston@state.mt.us, or you can also view it on MDT's website at www.mdt.state.mt.us/departments/transportation_planning/transit_programs.



CTEP Project Spotlight

(Community Transportation Enhancement Program)



Looking northwest up the Milk River

Troy Pedestrian Path

Take a walk on the wild side and check out this gem of a path in Troy. Completed in the spring of 2001, Lincoln County can take pride in this scenic 2.5-mile pedestrian path.

The 8-foot wide asphalt path connects to a sidewalk on the northwest edge of Troy, follows U.S. Highway 2 and then encircles the landing strip of the Troy Airport. From Troy, the path follows a steep uphill climb. The photos below show a switchback designed into the path to separate the path from busy U. S. 2. The switchback design also provides for compliance with ADA standards.

Once the path crests the hill outside Troy, it leaves the U.S. 2 right-of-way and crosses Hunts Mill Road. From there, it winds along a serpentine path through pine forests and grasslands surrounding the Troy Airport.

The path is on MDT, U.S. Forest Service and Lincoln County right-of-way. The general contractor, Noble Excavating, Inc. from Libby, constructed the path for about \$200,000. Lincoln County crews performed clearing and grubbing operations and placed sub-base materials. The design and construction engineer was Thomas, Dean & Hoskins, Inc. of Kalispell.

CTEP congratulates Lincoln County for its efforts in getting this well-used path built.

Wahkpa Chu'gn Buffalo Jump

Explore Montana's rich heritage - visit Wahkpa Chu'gn! This site was a prehistoric Indian buffalo jump and campsite. It was used over 2,000 years ago - well before CTEP funds were involved. Had the CTEP project been built when the site was first used, the Besant archaeological culture would have walked along 1,000 feet of asphalt pedestrian paths and parked their shuttle in a mini storage shed. Hundreds of years later, the Avonlea and Saddle Butte cultures would have enjoyed the same.

Wahkpa Chu'gn is located north of the Holiday Village Mall, on the west end of Havre. Information regarding tours can be found inside the mall, or you can call (406) 265-6417 or (406) 265-4000, or check the web site at www.buffalojump.org. A shuttle is available to ensure that disabled users can enjoy the site. For those of you who don't speak the language of the Assiniboiné, Wahkpa Chu'gn was their name for the Milk River.

This CTEP project was funded jointly by Hill County and the City of Havre. Commissioner Pat Conway and Bear Paw Development's Craig Erickson deserve a congratulatory pat-on-the-back for their efforts in seeing this project through to completion. The design engineer was Robert Peccia & Associates of Helena; the contractor was B & B, Inc., Havre and John Brumley provided an extraordinary amount of expertise regarding the archaeological aspects of the site.



After



Before

Billings - Bikenet

(excerpts from a report by Ramona Mattix, Billings Yellowstone County Planning Director)

CTEP has been a major impetus in the creation of the Billings Trail System, known locally as "Bikenet". As part of the local transportation plan, Bikenet is a plan for bike and pedestrian paths throughout Billings and adjacent areas in Yellowstone County. In the early 1990's, Billings took the first steps to develop a community wide system by adopting a City Council policy that prioritized use of CTEP funding for sidewalk construction along school routes. Some CTEP funding is still being used for pedestrian school route improvements in Billings.

The centerpiece of the trail program is the CTEP-funded 2-mile long Kiwanis Trail. The trail runs along an old railway corridor through the east end of Billings Heights to Metra Park. Sometimes called the Metra Trail, this 10-foot wide concrete path is heavily used by pedestrians and bicyclists. Present projects, also funded by CTEP, will extend this trail from Metra Park to the Yellowstone River, along the river through Coulson and Mystic Parks and from the river to downtown Billings. In addition, CTEP funds were used to improve a trail head adjacent to the Kiwanis Trail that serves Two Moon Park, a County Park along the Yellowstone River.

CTEP has also been a major funding source for streetscape, sidewalk and curb improvements in downtown Billings. Montana Avenue and Broadway have distinctively designed pedestrian improvements, including landscaping, patterned concrete, vintage lighting and benches. These projects include design innovations such as sidewalk extensions to allow for outside patio dining and returning diagonal parking to streets that previously supported only parallel parking. These innovations have transformed the pedestrian environment in the downtown area and have jump-started downtown revitalization.

Future CTEP projects will provide for additional growth of Bikenet and include routes to Zoo Montana and the Yellowstone River (further to the south). Billings will continue to use CTEP to enhance the major gems in the community, the Yellowstone River and the downtown.



Metra Trail



Metra Trail



Two Moon Park

***For more information on CTEP call
Thomas Martin at (406) 444-0809 or
e-mail tmartin@state.mt.us.***



Nominations Needed for the 2003 – 2005 STIP

MDT's Project Analysis Section is gearing up for the 2003 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process. The STIP is a list of most major transportation projects planned for Montana for the next three Federal fiscal years. These projects include Aeronautics, Rail, Highway, Public Transportation, and Federal Lands Highway projects. One of the first steps in developing a STIP is to solicit nominations for transportation projects.

Anyone can suggest projects for improving Montana's transportation system. These project nominations can be for any of Montana's highway systems, including projects for reconstructing or resurfacing a roadway, replacing a bridge, improving safety features on a road, or any other transportation project. If you have a suggestion on how to improve the transportation system in your "neighborhood", now is the time to let MDT know about it. Once all nominations have been compiled, the 2003-2005 Draft STIP will be published and distributed for public comment. Look for it in your local library this summer or contact Jeff Ebert for your copy.

Whether you have an idea for a future transportation project, or you are just curious about a current project, feel free to contact Jeff Ebert, Project Analysis Engineer, at (406) 444-7639 or (800) 714-7296 or jebert@state.mt.us.

*If you have questions about the Newsline
or suggestions for future articles
e-mail jscott@state.mt.us.*

*or send to Joan Scott,
Montana Department of Transportation,
Planning Division,
PO Box 201001, Helena MT 59620-1001.*

*This publication is on the web
<http://www.mdt.state.mt.us/planning/newsline.html>
The photos are in color and the website is full of
valuable information!*

What is ARC?

In 1997, after 26 years and approximately \$22 billion in federal operating subsidies and capital investments, Congress passed the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997. This act included a provision that required Amtrak to achieve operating self-sufficiency by December 2, 2002. The Act also created the 11-member Amtrak Reform Council to oversee Amtrak operations. The act required ARC to submit an action plan for creating a rationalized and restructured rail system to Congress if the council found that Amtrak could not meet the self-sufficiency goal.

Amtrak Reform Council Releases Action Plan for Restructuring

MDT is following several recent developments that could impact Montana's existing passenger rail service as well as proposed new service.

On February 7, the Amtrak Reform Council (ARC), a federal commission created to oversee Amtrak's performance, recommended to Congress that it implement a fundamental reorganization of the national rail passenger program. ARC's Action Plan calls for a new business model for Amtrak and the introduction of competition in train operations. The new business model would restructure the National Rail Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), into three entities: a federal oversight agency, a government-owned and operated corporation to control the infrastructure Amtrak currently owns, and a train operating company. The recommendation also proposes that the federal oversight agency, after a transition period, have the ability to allow private companies to franchise some current Amtrak routes. The Empire Builder, which travels 2,200 miles between Chicago and Seattle and serves Montana's Hi-Line, would be a candidate for such franchising.

A week before ARC made its recommendations, Amtrak announced a \$285 million package of spending cuts and capital investment deferrals and warned that it may be forced to discontinue all long-distance train service in October if Congress and the Administration do not appropriate adequate funds for Federal Fiscal Year '03. Amtrak is requesting \$1.2 billion for its federal appropriation in FY '03. Given the uncertainty about the appropriation level and the 180-day notice required by law, Amtrak will post a contingency notice on the entire long-distance network on March 29.

Because of the importance of Amtrak's Empire Builder to Montana residents and businesses, MDT will continue to monitor developments and work with Montana's congressional delegation to ensure that Montana's voice is heard during discussions about Amtrak's future.

**To view ARC's Action Plan, visit
www.amtrakreformcouncil.gov or call Tom Steyaert
at (406) 444-7646 or e-mail tsteyaert@state.mt.us
for more information.**



Questions and Answers about Potholes

Potholes are as much a springtime ritual as sunshine and gentle rains. Like dandelions in the front yard, there's a fresh crop every year.

What makes a pothole?

Potholes are created when moisture seeps into the pavement, freezing, expanding, and then thawing. This weakens the pavement. Traffic loosens the pavement even more, and it eventually crumbles and pops out.

Why do so many potholes occur in the spring?

Spring temperatures warm the cold pavement, melting and evaporating any frozen water. This creates air pockets that can eventually cause the pavement to break up. A winter of heavy snow or rain and several freeze-thaw cycles can mean a big pothole season ahead.

How are potholes repaired?

The pothole is carved out with a jackhammer or masonry saw to create a neat rectangle. Once the excess asphalt is shoveled away, an adhesive is applied and asphalt is added in layers. It is leveled off and compacted with an asphalt pavement roller.

Are there different kinds of repairs?

During cold weather, temporary repairs are made with cold patch asphalt, because the weather is too cold to use hot asphalt. During warmer temperatures, hot asphalt is used for more permanent repairs.

Do some roads have more potholes than others?

Roads with high traffic volumes have more potholes than others due to the sheer amount of use. Bridges and ramps, which receive heavy doses of snow removal chemicals all winter, are more prone to potholes, too.

Can anything be done to prevent potholes?

Roads today are being built to reduce their moisture capacity, and researchers are working to develop a better, more durable pavement. Researchers also have improved the cold-patch asphalt so those patches last longer.



*License plate graphic used with permission of
Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission*

Bicentennial License Plate

With new commemorative Lewis & Clark license plates, Montana motorists can put some pizzazz on their bumpers while they support the efforts of Montana's Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission.

The new plates, available at licensing bureaus in all Montana counties, prominently feature the key leaders of the Corps of Discovery: Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and their guide Sacajawea with her son "Pomp." Also present is the familiar outline of the state, along with the words proclaiming "Lewis & Clark Bicentennial."

Sales of the plates help fund Lewis & Clark Bicentennial events all across Montana. Plates cost \$30, with \$20 going to the Bicentennial Commission: renewals are \$20 in subsequent years, with all the money going to the Bicentennial Commission.

The Bicentennial officially begins in 2003, however Montana is already preparing and hosting events ranging from historical reenactments to Indian encampments to festivals and theater presentations.

The full-color plates, designed by H2O Advertising, feature a bold color scheme with maroon, yellow and navy blue predominating. For more information, contact Clint Blackwood, Executive Director of the Montana Lewis & Clark Bicentennial Commission at (406) 443-2109 or cblackwood@state.mt.us, or go to the commission's web site at www.montanalewisandclark.org.

***The Transportation Commission will
meet on April 11,
location to be announced.***

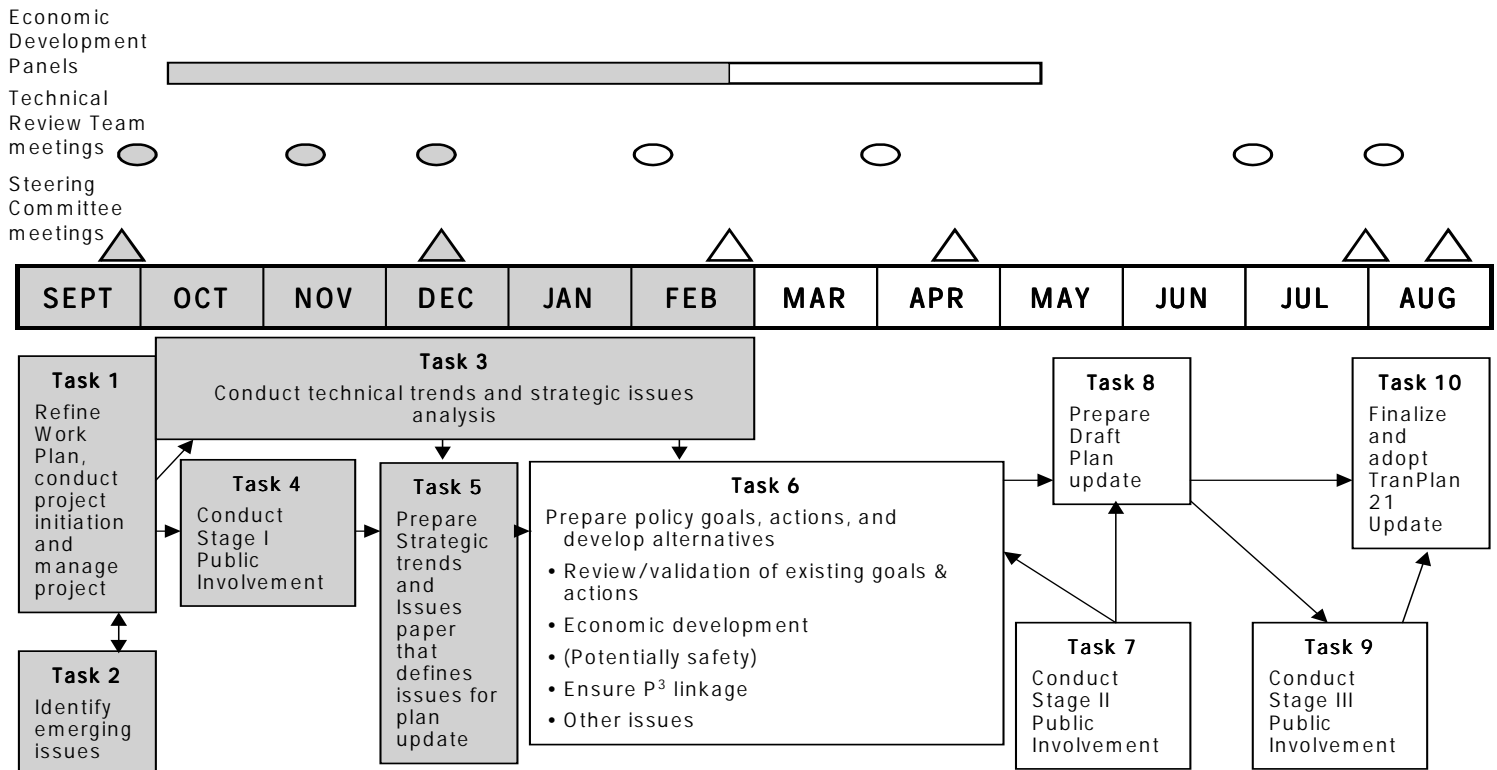




TRANPLAN 21 UPDATE

2002

With the help of hundreds of Montana residents and a team of nationally recognized consultants, the first update of Montana's statewide multimodal transportation plan is on schedule for completion in September.



- ♣ Stage I of the public involvement process included a series of district staff, stakeholder and open house meetings held around the state in November and December. They took place in Great Falls, Missoula, Butte, Billings, and Miles City with the district staff meeting in the morning, the stakeholder meeting in the afternoon, and the public open house in the evening.
- ♣ 6,000 copies of a special edition of *Newsline* with a survey insert were mailed out in November and over 400 surveys were completed and returned.
- ♣ The Economic Development Policy Committee held its first meeting on November 20th. The committee consists of:
 - Senator Glen Rousch
 - Representative Robert Story
 - Jim Davison, President- Montana Economic Developer Association
 - Webb Brown, President- Montana Chamber of Commerce
 - Dave Gibson, Chief Business Officer- Governor's Office
 - Mark Simonich, Director- Montana Department of Commerce
 - Dan Larson- Montana Transportation Commission
- ♣ The Economic Development Expert Panel met on December 19th.

- ♣ A joint meeting of the Economic Development Policy Committee and Expert Panel is scheduled for March 21st in Helena. The meeting will gather input on existing and proposed economic development policy goals and actions.

The Steering Committee met in conjunction with the December 13th Transportation Commission meeting and directed MDT's consultant team to begin work on a new safety policy paper, continue to develop an updated economic development policy paper, and to review and update existing *TranPlan 21* policy papers based on the Stage I public and stakeholder input.

Stay Involved!

- E-mail your comments or suggestions to tranplan21@state.mt.us
- Call us with your comments or suggestions at the *TranPlan 21* toll free number at 1-800-714-7296
- Keep checking the *TranPlan 21 Update* website at www.mdt.state.mt.us - - click on the *TranPlan 21 Update* icon.
- Watch for Stage II public meetings tentatively scheduled for May or June.



Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study on the Way

Last year, following several discussions with local officials about the importance of four-lane highways to economic development, Governor Martz requested a study of the economic impacts of widening Montana's major two-lane highways. Since then, MDT has worked with a study steering committee of outside experts to develop a scope of work for the study and hire a consulting firm with expertise in the highway system's role in economic development.

Studies of economic impacts associated with highway improvements have traditionally focused on impacts related to highway construction projects and im-

proved service to existing highway users. However, because of the interest in many Montana communities in using highway widening as a tool to attract new development, the Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study will also examine economic impacts outside of the highway right-of-ways. The results of the study will provide useful information for the update of TranPlan 21, Montana's statewide transportation policy plan, and will give local and state officials involved in efforts to improve Montana's economy a better understanding of the relationship between widened highways and the economy.

The consultant selection process will wrap up in late March. For more information on the Montana Highway Reconfiguration Study contact Dick Turner at (406) 444-7289 or dtturner@state.mt.us.

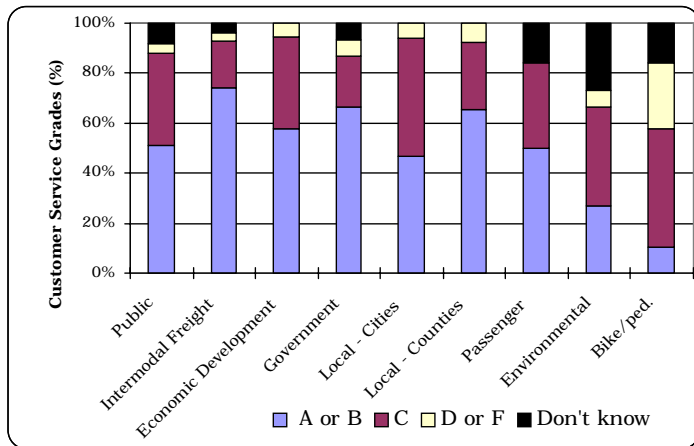
MDT and Customer Service - How Are We Doing?

The *TranPlan 21* public involvement process includes biennial telephone and stakeholder surveys. These surveys are done in part to identify changes in public opinion and to determine public opinion on emerging issues. In 2001, MDT asked survey respondents eight new questions about their opinions regarding overall MDT performance and responsiveness to the public and transportation stakeholders.

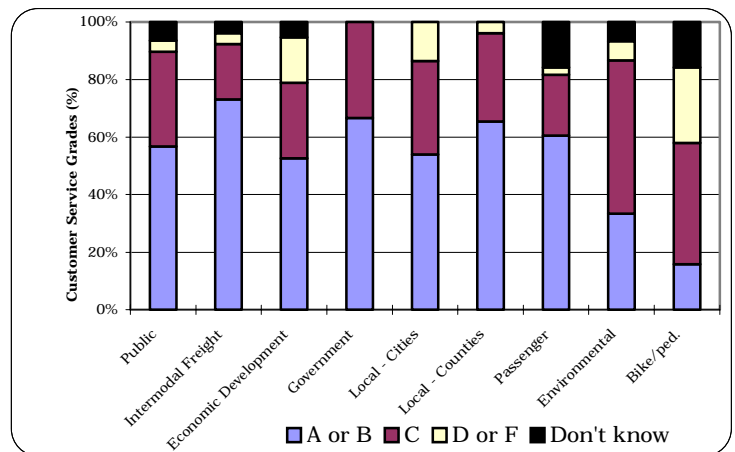
MDT will use the results of this survey to identify areas that need further analysis and attention and as a baseline for future surveys.

The respondents were asked to grade various aspects of MDT's customer service, using an A through F scale (A = excellent, B = good, C = average, D = poor, F = failing). Respondents were also asked to indicate if they did not have enough information to give a grade in a particular area. The results show a variety of opinions and satisfaction levels.

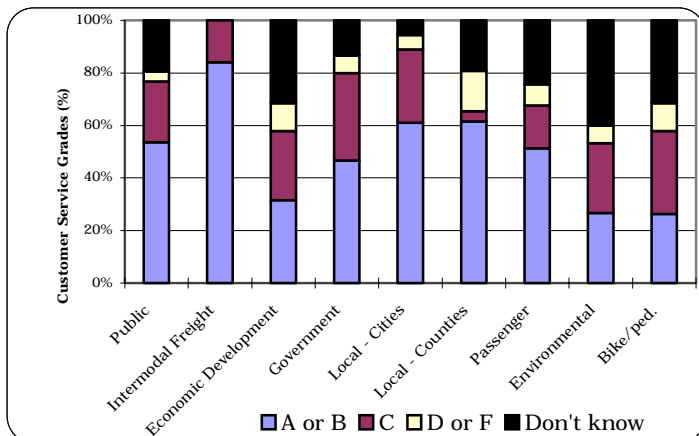
How would you grade MDT's overall performance during the past year?



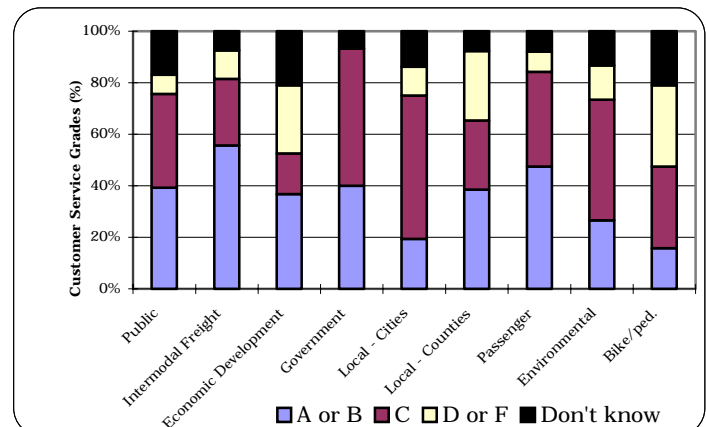
What grade would you give MDT on the quality of service it provides?



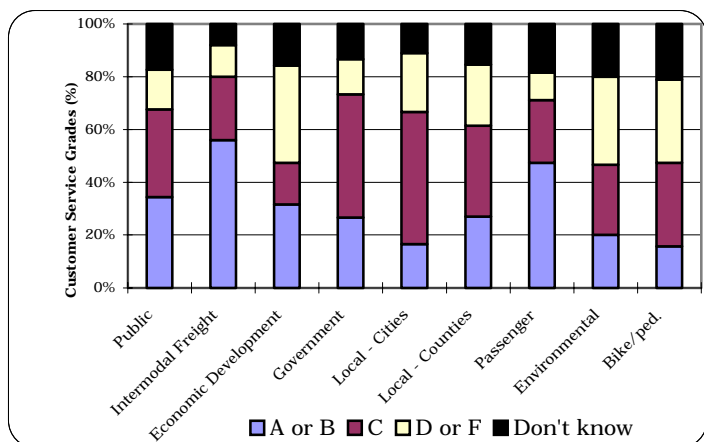
Overall, how would you grade the current quality of service provided by MDT compared to the quality of service 5 years ago?



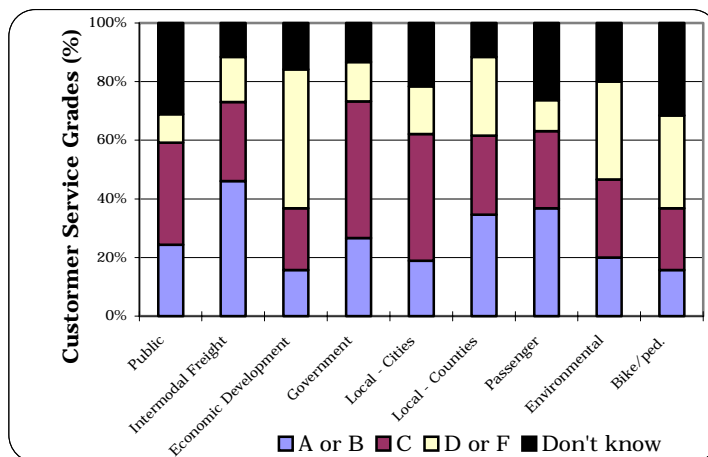
What grade would you give MDT on overall quality of planning to meet statewide transportation needs?



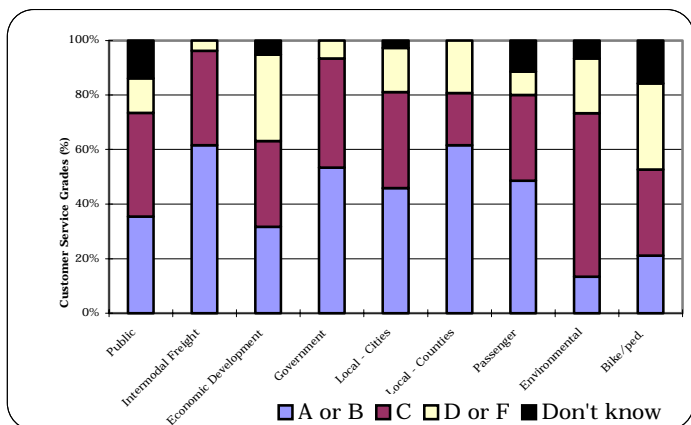
What grade would you give MDT for its encouragement of outside ideas and concerns from customers?



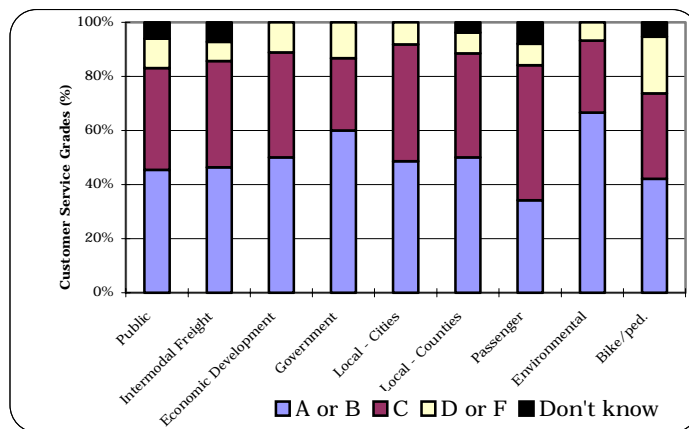
What grade would you give MDT for its responsiveness to outside ideas and concerns from customers?



What grade would you give MDT on its efforts to keep customers fully informed of all relevant information and upcoming decisions related to the transportation system?



What grade would you give MDT on the extent of inconvenience caused by construction and/or maintenance projects?



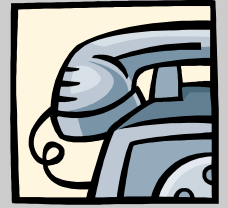
In general, the respondents to both the telephone and stakeholder surveys gave MDT B- or C+ grades. The intermodal freight stakeholder group consistently gave MDT higher grades for all questions while the Bicycle/ Pedestrian and Environmental stakeholder groups consistently gave MDT lower grades.

The 2001 Telephone Survey is available on MDT's website at www.mdt.state.us or by contacting Kris Christensen at (406)444-9687 or by e-mail at krchristensen@state.mt.us. Look for the 2001 Stakeholder Survey report later this spring.

Inside this issue:

<i>RABA</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Townsend Community Project</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Transit Tales</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>CTEP Project Spotlight</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>STIP & ARC</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Bicentennial License Plate</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>TranPlan 21 Update</i>	<i>8-9</i>
<i>Stakeholder Survey Results</i>	<i>10-11</i>

Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers



Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 1-800-714-7296 (in Montana only), or (406) 444-3423. TTY (406) 444-7696 or 1-800-335-7592.

Administrator (Patricia Saindon).....	444-0410
Bike/Pedestrian (Carol Strizich) ..	444-9273
CTEP (Mike Davis).....	444-4383
Map Orders (James Colegrove).....	444-6119
Multimodal Planning (Dick Turner)	444-7289
Projects (Jeff Ebert).....	444-7639
Secondary Roads (Gary Larson).....	444-6110
Road Data & Mapping (Zia Kazimi).....	444-6111
Traffic Data (Dan Bisom).....	444-6122
Transit (Janis Winston)	444-4210
Urban Planning (Lynn Zanto).....	444-3445
ITS Planning (Ross Tervo)	444-9248
Newsline Editor (Joan Scott)	444-7307

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MDT's Mission

*To serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize
quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality
and sensitivity to the environment.*



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